

Facts About Colorectal Cancer

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What You Should Know

- Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death in Michigan, with only lung cancer taking the lives of more men and women.¹
- Michigan ranks 36th in the nation in colorectal cancer mortality.²
- Men and women 50 years of age and older who are not at special risk for colorectal cancer are encouraged to follow a screening schedule consisting of:
 - ✓ A fecal occult blood test (testing for blood in the stool) every year *plus* a flexible sigmoidoscopy (a procedure to examine the lower portion of the colon) and a digital rectal exam every five years,
 - or*
 - ✓ A double-contrast barium enema (an X-ray of the colon) and a digital rectal exam every five to 10 years,
 - or*
 - ✓ A colonoscopy (a procedure to examine the entire colon) and a digital rectal exam every 10 years.³
- Men and women who are considered to have additional risk factors for colorectal cancer are encouraged to begin colorectal cancer screening at a younger age and undergo screening more frequently.

Risk Factors

- There are several factors that increase one's risk of developing colorectal cancer. These include:
 - ✓ increasing age;
 - ✓ a personal history of colon cancer, colon polyps, or inflammatory bowel disease;
 - ✓ a family history of colorectal cancer;
 - ✓ being a Jew of Eastern European descent;
 - ✓ a diet high in animal fats or low in fiber;
 - ✓ not being physically active;
 - ✓ obesity;
 - ✓ diabetes;
 - ✓ smoking; and
 - ✓ heavy use of alcohol.⁴
- The two most common forms of hereditary colorectal cancer are familial adenomatous polyposis (many colonic polyps) and hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer (few, if any, polyps).
 - ✓ Together, these two hereditary forms account for only about 5 percent of all cases of colon cancer.
 - ✓ Inherited mutations in any of the genes contributing to these conditions could put an individual at a high risk of developing colorectal cancer.
 - ✓ In some cases, these mutations can be associated with an increased risk for other cancers.⁴

Incidence and Mortality

- During 2001, 2,634 men and 2,729 women in Michigan were diagnosed with invasive colorectal cancer.⁵
- During 2002, 985 men and 950 women in our state died from colorectal cancer.¹
- Men are more likely than women to develop colorectal cancer and die. African-Americans have higher colorectal cancer incidence and mortality rates than people of other racial groups.^{1,5,6}

Stage at Diagnosis

- In Michigan, 39.0 percent of colorectal cancer cases diagnosed during 2001 were found at a local stage, when the cancer was still confined to the colon or rectum. This includes 38.8 percent of newly diagnosed cases in women and 39.1 percent of newly diagnosed cases in men.⁵
- Since the early 1990s, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of colorectal cancer cases diagnosed in Michigan at a local stage.⁵
- Of individuals diagnosed with colorectal cancer at a local stage, 89.9 percent will survive at least five years. This is compared with a five-year survival rate of 67.3 percent when colorectal cancer is diagnosed at a regional stage, meaning the cancer has spread to surrounding tissues, and 9.6 percent when colorectal cancer diagnosed at a distant stage, meaning it has metastasized.⁶
- Five-year survival rates for the disease vary by race and ethnicity. African-Americans diagnosed with colorectal cancer at any stage are less likely than other races to survive five years. The five-year survival rate for African-Americans diagnosed with colorectal cancer is 9.5 percent lower than that for Caucasians diagnosed with the disease.⁶

Screening Behaviors

- Approximately 67 percent of Michigan men and women 50 years of age and older have used a home fecal occult blood test to determine whether there is blood present in their stools.
 - ✓ Women are more likely than men (68.8 percent vs. 63.7 percent) to have used the test.
 - ✓ American Indians, Hispanics, and Arab Americans are less likely than African Americans or Caucasians to have used the test.⁷
- Nearly 61 percent of Michigan men and women 50 years of age and older have had a sigmoidoscopy or a colonoscopy exam (procedures to examine the rectum) at least once during their lifetime. Racial and ethnic minorities are less likely than Caucasians to have ever had at least one of these tests.⁷

References:

1. MDCH Division for Vital Records & Health Statistics, 1985-2002
2. NCI State Cancer Profiles
3. Michigan Colorectal Cancer Advisory Committee
4. American Cancer Society
5. MDCH Cancer Registry, 1985-2001
6. SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2001
7. Cancer Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 2001-2002